

Letters

Animal pests in medieval Southwark

IT IS generally accepted that in the middle ages rabbits were comparatively rare and not the pest they are today. It seemed necessary to help them with coneywarrens and pillow mounds, the ownership of such was supposed to be a privilege granted by the King, and rabbit meat was expensive (see E. Veale, *Ag Hist Rev* 5 (1967) 85-90 — Veale does point to the borough charter of Dunster of 1254-7 as evidence for damage by rabbits, but the Latin is ambiguous and the provisions are primarily concerned with controlling the killing of rabbits).

I have recently come across clear evidence for rabbit damage in Southwark in 1272/3 when the bishop of Winchester and the lessee of pastures in Southwark shared the cost of labourers filling in rabbit holes (Pipe Roll BI/125). There is no clear evidence that the bishop kept rabbits in Southwark (though in 1383-5 rabbit dung was removed from opposite the stable) so they must have escaped from someone else's warren. The Duke of Cornwall had two warrens at Kennington Palace which is not very far away, though neither of them is referred to before 1408; perhaps the archbishop of Canterbury had one at Lambeth Palace (indeed in 1279 the assize jury did present that the then archbishop had built a new warren at Lambeth).

A much more serious pest, however, was moles. From 1406 to 1419, for all years for which accounts survive, money was spent on catching moles and spreading their molehills. The amounts varied from 4s 4d to 12s 8d, depending on how many moles were caught. At this time the demesne area of the bishop's manor in Southwark was used only for growing hay, and no doubt moles did make this difficult.

It may be significant that, though moles were killed in quite large numbers, there is no reference to the killing of rabbits, only to filling in their burrows, which fits with the protected status of rabbits in the middle ages.

Further to my letter in the summer issue, and contrary to the argument put forward there, I have now found one occasion, in 1374/5, when an old boat and half a broken one were bought to repair the wharf in front of the bishop's palace. These cost 6s, and 7s worth of boards were also bought for the same work, and it took one carpenter (not a shipwright) eight days to do the work.

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Reigate Stone

TIM TATTON-BROWN'S response to Christina de Domingo's article¹ is disappointing as well as mystifying. We are told that her article is 'poor' without any explanation being advanced. The second paragraph then deals with matters that were only peripheral to the article. As far as I can gather, it seems that we are condemned for failing to recognise that Greensand is Greensand as if this was some self-evident fact. We compound our sins (I think) by going on to try to sub-divide Greensand into different categories by scientific means. This is apparently a complete waste of time.

We were fortunate that Christina chose to use her professional knowledge for an archaeological purpose. The question I posed her was to see if any differences in petrology could be recognised in what was apparently an homogeneous Reigate Stone. The aim was not to find secure sources, although her enterprising fieldwork produced interesting comparisons. There were

several architectural fragments that seemed to represent two phases on art-historical grounds, but further evidence was needed. Sophisticated scientific methods proved capable of recognising differences not apparent to the eye. The percentage of glauconite recognised two groups that correspond to the art-historical groups.

It has been recently stated in the context of archaeological building stone that "... specialists from different fields must work together if we are to make any real progress in identification or interpretation"² and the project was precisely of that nature. Parsons goes on to say "... the prime need is for secure petrological determinations based on scientific observation rather than on the subjective impressions that have tended to bedevil the subject in the past"³. Tatton-Brown's 'digging archaeologists' making identifications is half the problem! I take issue with the idea of anyone immediately categorising stone as 'Reigate Stone' or 'chalk', 'Purbeck Marble', 'Kentish Rag' except on a provisional basis. This is because such firm labels discourage further thought or analysis. In principle, such identifications should be provisional until proven. How many varieties of south-eastern English marble (for example) have been universally branded 'Purbeck Marble' by the semi-knowledgeable in the past? How much knowledge has been lost as a result?

The emphasis of the article was on the scientific analysis of the stone itself, rather than the role the stone played in the medieval period. We were all beginners once, and this should be taken into consideration before branding early efforts as 'poor'.

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1. Christina de Domingo 'The provenance of some building stones in St Mary Spital by geological methods' *London Archaeol* 7, no. 9 (1994) 240-3.
2. David Parsons (ed) *Stone Quarrying and Building in England* (1990) xi.
3. *Ibid.*, 13.

Roman London

WITH REGARD TO Andrew Selkirk's plea for help concerning the status of Roman London (*LA* 7, no. 12), I suspect that given its convenient location and range of diversions it was an early form of Disneyland, serving Roman Britain and Gaul. The clue to this must surely be in the Tube station clearly marked on my revised copy of Merrifield's map of the London Undergrounds, inspiration for the logo of which is now obvious!

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